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SUBJECT: ALLEGATIONS AND ACCUSATIONS IN NAMPULA: UNCOVERING
THE TRUTH ABOUT TRAFFICKING IN ORGANS AND CHILDREN

1. Summary: Allegations of trafficking in human organs and children in the northern provincial capital of Nampula have riveted the public's attention for the past several months and received wide-spread press coverage. In the middle of the firestorm is a foreign couple accused of trafficking in organs by a Brazilian missionary. Following weeks of sensationalistic articles slanted against the couple, the climate has begun to change as the press has acknowledged that the couple may have been the victims of rumors and unfounded allegations. An investigation by the Attorney General's office found no evidence to support the accusations against the couple. High-ranking government officials and opposition party leaders in Maputo and the provinces have weighed-in on the case, with both parties calling for enhanced measures to investigate and prosecute traffickers. The case has been discussed twice in the National Assembly. While a number of international organizations and high-level government officials have questioned the accuracy of the allegations, criticism of the investigation undertaken by the Attorney General's office has been widespread. End Summary.

2. The allegations leveled against the foreign couple (the husband is South African, the wife is Danish) stem from a single source: a Brazilian missionary named Maria Elialda dos Santos. The couple are neighbors of dos Santos and own a successful poultry project in Nampula. The case first attracted public attention in December, when the couple were detained by local authorities on trafficking charges and spent several days in jail. The couple was released due to a lack of evidence and the intervention of the Danish Ambassador. Post contacts in Nampula who know the couple personally have categorically stated that they are innocent and are being framed by Ms. dos Santos over a land dispute.

3. In response to the allegations, the Attorney General's office sent several teams of investigators to Nampula, including the country's leading forensic doctor. Local police and investigators have also been working on the case. The preliminary report on the investigations found no evidence of trafficking in human organs. However, the report did not specifically clear the couple of the charges. The investigation on allegations of trafficking in children, based principally on charges of missing or "disappeared" children, were inconclusive. Investigations are on-going. The Attorney General's report has been widely criticized by the press, religious groups, local NGOs and the opposition party RENAMO, who have questioned publicly the credibility of the investigation.

3. The Attorney General's annual report to the National Assembly on the country's legal system, presented on March 9, focused extensively on the Nampula case. While Attorney General Madeira noted during his remarks that there was no evidence to support the allegations of trafficking in human organs, he did not fully vindicate the foreign couple. In fact, he stated only that the investigation did not "categorically" prove that the couple was involved in the alleged crimes and called for a continuation of the investigation. The Nampula case was also cited during the opening session of the National Assembly on March 1. During the session, Manuel Tome, Head of the FRELIMO parliamentary bench, urged a professional and thorough investigation of the case and noted the Assembly's "willingness and readiness" to work towards the adoption of anti-trafficking legislation.

4. Comment: The Nampula case has served to highlight both the lack of education about trafficking in persons among civil society and many government officials, and the power that traditional beliefs still hold in Mozambique. NGOs and government programs on trafficking in Mozambique have focused almost exclusively on children, reflecting, in part, concerns stemming from a tradition of child migration and abuse in the country. Yet, international organizations such as the International Organization on Migration (IOM), which produced a report on trafficking in Southern Africa in 2003, found that a significant number of cases of trafficking in Mozambique involve women. On the positive side, the Nampula case has served to raise public awareness about trafficking and may well prompt the adoption of more aggressive government policies to investigate and prosecute traffickers, including the adoption of desperately needed anti-trafficking legislation. However, given the lack of financial and technical resources within the government on trafficking issues, international assistance will likely be required for the development and implementation of effective policies or programs.

